COUNTY DEPARTMENT AGENDA REQUEST

Department:	Commissioners	Presenter(s):	Commissioner Steve Brown
Meeting Date:	Wednesday, March 2, 2011	Type of Request:	New Business

Wording for the Agenda:

Consideration of Resolution 2011-06 regarding Fiscal Responsibility and Protecting Fayette County's Quality of Life, as presented by Commissioner Brown.

Background/History/Details:

Commissioner Brown drafted Resolution 2011-06 on "Fiscal Responsibility and Protecting Fayette County's Quality of Life" . It requests that the Board of Commissioners do the following:

1) Remove any and all planned public mass transit projects with Fayette County's boundaries from all plans, tables, and maps with the Federal Government, the State of Georgia, and the Atlanta Regional Commission.

2) Remove Fayette County from any obligation to any type of regional transit authority,

3) Relieve Fayette County from any financial burden for funding regional mass transit beyond the "Transportation Investment Act of 2010" (HB 277) formulas.

A copy of the proposed Resolution has been sent to the Mayors of all five of the County's municipalities to determine if there is support from those entities. Mayors Haddix of Peachtree City and Mayor Rehwaldt of Tyrone have expressed support.

What action are you seeking from the Board of Commissioners?

No action is requested at this time. If this resolution meets with the Board's favor, it will be placed on the March 24, 2011 agenda for formal consideration.

If this item requires funding, please describe:

Not applicable.

Has this issue come before the Commissioners in the past?	No	If so, when?	
Do you need audio-visual for the presentation?	No	Back-up Material Submitted?	Yes

STAFF USE ONLY

Approved by Finance	Not Applicable	Reviewed by Legal	
Approved by Purchasing	Not Applicable	Approved by County Clerk	Yes
Administrator's Approval	Yes		

Staff Notes:

Thinking Right with Jim Wooten (http://blogs.ajc.com/thinking-right)

Three cheers for a selfless coach

9:07 pm February 10, 2011, by jwooten

Thinking Right's weekend free-for-all. Pick a topic:

● Tuesday's wrong-way-driver crash on I-285 caused an eight-hour shutdown of a section of the interstate that handles 200,000 vehicles per day. The wreck at Dunwoody demonstrates how vulnerable metro Atlanta is to gridlock — and how the terms employed in our transportation policy debate can lead to the wrong remedies. Commuters took to off-interstate roadways, the arterials. Those are, in fact, the "alternatives" that can serve a majority of the region's drivers. Yet when the term "alternatives" is bandied about in transportation planning, it invariably is code for a costly mass transit network that's an "alternative" for the few who happen to be near fixed stations. Spend where we get the most congestion relief for the dollar.

THIS LETTER WAS TRANSMITTED VIA EMAIL FROM MAYOR REHWALDT

February 16, 2011

140 Stonewall Avenue West
Suite 100
Fayetteville, Georgia 30290

Dear County Commissioners:

As I am sure you are aware, the citizens of Fayette have, with great uniformity expressed their feeling that mass transit is detrimental to the preferred growth pattern and well being of Fayette County.

I am also aware that repeated promises that mass transit in any form is not something that is being contemplated by the county government; in fact, loudly dismissed as something that will not happen.

However, it seems that many of the projects outlined in Concept 3 and Plan 2040 include these transportation alternatives.

Commissioner Brown is accurate in his facts concerning limited users of mass transit and that the cost of maintaining any mass transit alternatives are inefficient and well beyond our ability to maintain such systems. The demise of Clayton County's bus system and the necessary raising of fares and reduction in service in Cobb Counties are but two examples.

Providing for parking and maintenance facilities and their continued upkeep of any such system has not been mentioned in H.B. 277 nor been funded.

I support Commissioner Brown's insightful evaluation of bringing mass transit to Fayette County and agree.

Sincerely,

Don Rehwaldt
Mayor

From: Don Haddix

Fellow Mayors,

I endorse the resolution.

The PTC Council has already removed all references of any form of Mass Transit from the PTC Transportation Plan.

As well in the endorsement statement for the County Transportation Plan we clearly stated our objections regarding references to Concept 3, etc.

Mass Transit is contrary to the will of the citizens of PTC and Fayette County as a whole.

Thanks.

Don Haddix
Peachtree City Mayor

From: Carol Chandler

Hi Mayors:

Commissioner Brown has drafted the attached Resolution which he plans to bring before the Board of Commissioners at their Workshop on March 2 at 3:30 p.m. If there is a consensus among Board members toward adopting the Resolution, they will place it on the agenda for an upcoming meeting where they will be able to take action on it, most likely the March 10 meeting.

Commissioner Brown has asked that you be sent a copy of it. If you would like to support the Resolution, a letter or email of support from you can be passed along to the Board of Commissioners prior to the Workshop on March 2. If you decide to make a statement of support, you can pass it along to me via email if you like and I will be sure the Commissioners receive it. Mayor Rehwaldt has already done so.

Thanks to all!

Chairman Jack Smith & mass transit plans

Two members of our Fayette County Board of Commissioners are up for re-election this November: Jack Smith and Eric Maxwell.

We all know about their “build the West Fayetteville Bypass at any cost” stance. We know about their intentions to close the interchange at Ga. Highway 74 and I-85 in favor of a new interchange at Ga. Highway 92 and I-85, a way to justify building the sham of a bypass, leaving Tyrone, Peachtree City and Brooks commuters in a lurch.

Likewise, we voted down their pork-barrel spending antics in the recent SPLOST referendum.

Now let me tell you what else you need to look out for related to mass transit in Fayette County. Commission Chairman Jack Smith has been actively participating in the planning and implementation processes of bringing mass transit to Fayette County.

In fact, the plans from the Transit Planning Board (TPB) actually designate Fayetteville and Peachtree City as “transit centers,” (Source: Transit Planning Board Final Technical Report, Concept 3, p. 16, figure 2.2, System Framework).

At their “Aug. 28, 2008 meeting, the TPB Board voted to adopt Concept 3 as the regional transit vision” (TBP Staff Director’s Report September, 2008). Chairman Smith made no objections to the mass transit plan, Concept 3, as it was drafted and approved.

Indeed, the plan calls for buses from Clayton County, Henry County and Coweta County to come rolling into Fayette. In fact, we are the heart of their new “cross-regional corridor” for mass transit.

The plan which Chairman Smith favored and posed no objections to, according to TPB meeting minutes, calls for a “Southwest [transit rail] line from Senoia to Downtown Atlanta through Peachtree City and Union City” (TPB press release,**http://beltline.org/Portals/26/Concept%203%20Fact%20Sheet.pdf**).
Just how will the mass transit assembly line of buses, constantly bustling back and forth from Newnan to McDonough with us caught in the middle, along hwys. 34/54 improve the quality of life for the citizens of Fayette County?

Sadly, the irony is it will bring more congestion to that busy highway. Think about it; there are no HOV lanes in Fayette, so the buses will add to our traffic. And how many in our local population do you think will be riding that hectic bus route?

At this point, some well-intentioned readers are thinking mass transit in Fayette County is just the right thing to do. The part of this mass transit revelation Chairman Smith will surely never tell you about is the cost. Oh, yeah, we have to pay to shuttle the masses through our county.

The regional system will cost billions upon billions of dollars to assemble. Then there are the massive annual maintenance costs. In fact, “[t]o operate the full regional system, both existing and new expansion is estimated to be $1.2 billion annually” (TPB press release,**http://beltline.org/Portals/26/Concept%203%20Fact%20Sheet.pdf**).
You have heard that trains, buses and trolleys will save us time and money. Fulton County and DeKalb County have around 2 million residents and tons of business and industry, but they cannot keep their transit system afloat.

Similarly, Gwinnett County has nearly 800,000 residents along with huge amounts of industrial and retail taxes, but they are cutting six morning and eight evening express bus trips every day.

In fact, Gwinnett eliminated a significant portion of their Saturday bus service altogether, reducing frequency on the few routes that remained.

It is the same story with ultra-dense Clayton County as their bus system collapses.

Jack Smith currently serves on the regional Transit Implementation Board (TIB), “established in January 2009 to guide the implementation of Concept 3, the long-range transit vision for the Atlanta region developed by the board’s predecessor, the Transit Planning Board (TPB)” (**www.transitboard.org**/), assuring his regional government colleagues that Fayette County is on board when it comes to mass transit.

Considering that our county only has a projected population of 160,860 by 2030, you have to wonder how high our tax burden will become with our commission chairman not objecting to a plan causing an extensive financial burden on us.

Now our Chairman Smith contends (at least I have heard around Fayette he does) that he will never allow mass transit in Fayette County.

OK, so why did he approve the Concept 3 plan that includes Fayette County rail and buses?

Again, let it be said, I cannot find a single notation in the TBP or TIB meeting minutes where Smith is objecting to a plan calling for mass transit in our county.

Chairman Smith had yet a third time to object to the plans for mass transit in Fayette County when the Atlanta Regional Commission (Smith serves as a Fayette representative on ARC) approved the Concept 3 transit plan, but he did the opposite.

The Concept 3 transit plan clearly says, the “bus rapid transit regional transfer stations” are “Newnan, Peachtree City and Fayetteville,” and other projects include “GA 74 Expressway Bus, Peachtree City Commuter Rail and GA 85 Arterial Rapid Bus” reporting “service hours and frequency: All day, minimum 15-minute peak frequency, 30-minute off-peak” (Project Information Sheets for Elements of Concept 3, Project Analysis Information Sheet, p. 47, Transit Planning Board, December 18, 2008).

The GA 85 Arterial Rapid Bus service will connect Fayetteville to Riverdale and the large Southern Crescent Regional Transit Station, (Project Information Sheets for Elements of Concept 3, Project Analysis Information Sheet, p. 49, Transit Planning Board, December 18, 2008).

How in the world would we sustain mass transit with only a fraction of the population of the other counties? Even worse, as Chairman Smith will tell you, the implementation plan calls for everyone, including Fayette County, to opt into the regional mass transit system with a proposed regional sale tax funding mechanism.

Believe it or not, that means we in Fayette will be paying to cover the deficits of the larger counties.

I cannot find a single notation in the regional meetings where Smith objects to this funding methodology.

Up to this point, Fayette County has been the only county within the 10-county Atlanta Regional Commission not to opt into the failing regional mass transit system. Unfortunately, I fear our county commissioners could be silently pulling us into the mire.

I do not want to see Fayette County get blown away with Peachtree City and Fayetteville marked as mass transit centers. I am certain we could never endure the costs.

Van pooling works just fine in Fayette County, providing the ride with no cost to the county taxpayers.

Smith and Maxwell both favored the TDK Extension and are currently working away on the bogus West Fayetteville Bypass. Are these really people we can trust when they say they oppose mass transit in our county? Their actions speak louder than their words.

We need elected officials who will fight to save what we love about Fayette County, not give it away.

[Steve Brown is the former mayor of Peachtree City. He can be reached at stevebrownptc@ureach.com.]

Ralston: Regional transit agency still possible

By Ariel Hart

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

4:35 a.m. Thursday, February 17, 2011

Will metro Atlanta get a regional transit system this year after all?

For months, the topic has bedeviled legislators, infuriated urban advocates and threatened failure for the transportation tax referendum scheduled for 2012. But high-ranking legislative leaders said they simply weren't ready to take it on this year.

But when asked recently about the possibility, House Speaker David Ralston told The Atlanta Journal-Constitution that it's not out of the question.

"That's certainly an option," Ralston said. "I'm not saying it's at the top or the bottom or in the middle right now."

In December, Rep. Donna Sheldon, R-Dacula, chairwoman of a commission that is working on the regional transit issue, said she expected no such legislation this year because the issue needs time and care.

Ralston stressed that his new comments are not a turnabout from Sheldon's. "I don't want to suggest that it is a live probability," he said. "It's not a shift, it is that we are just looking at all of the reasonable options that we have this session. That is an option."

The criticism over the past 10 months stems from a referendum that is scheduled to take place in summer 2012, when metro Atlanta voters will decide whether to levy a 1 percent sales tax to fund a list of transportation projects in the 10-county region.

The project list is to be finalized this fall by local elected officials. If mass transit is to have a serious shot at a piece of that pie, advocates argue, transit investments must be named on the list under a new regional transit agency -- not under MARTA or other parochial transit agencies, which may turn off some voters. They also hope it could address problems that Fulton and DeKalb advocates have with the referendum law, such as who pays for MARTA.

Cobb and Gwinnett counties have their own transit systems and have been participating in the regional transit discussions.

Elected officials of the Gwinnett Municipal Association have endorsed creating a new governing body.

"We need a regional transit coordinating agency to provide for greater efficiency, help prioritize our transit needs and coordinate how we can best meet those needs on a regional basis," Norcross Mayor Bucky Johnson, past president of the group, said in a statement released Wednesday. He also is the nonvoting chairman of the executive committee that will draft the region's project list.

Atlanta City Councilman C.T. Martin said creating the regional agency this year would alleviate some of his concerns about the referendum law -- but the devil was in the details.

“I still would have to know how it’s been designed,” Martin said.

Indeed, creating a new transit agency could do little more than create a new layer of bureaucracy, leaving the current players unchanged beneath it. Or it could eliminate MARTA and other agencies and put all their operations, expansion and planning within one new entity.

Ralston said that it was too early to say where Atlanta would fall in that spectrum. While having a regional agency operate transit was a possibility, he said, "What’s important to me is that we have an agency, whether it’s a new agency or an existing agency that’s modified, that has a strong planning component."

Atlanta Mayor Kasim Reed heads a regional group that has suggested regional transit legislation to Sheldon’s commission, which will meet March 9. That legislation suggests a model like Chicago's, where the parochial agencies may stay intact with a regional agency above them. The former head of Chicago's agency, Steve Schlickman, recently left it partly because of urban-suburban tensions over resources, and he said having a single unified system is preferable.

Reed has not lost hope the Legislature will come around.

Told of Ralston’s latest comments, Reed smiled slightly. “It’s going to be a gardening process,” he said, “where you’re just going to have to stay at nurturing relationships, making sure you’ve got a solid piece of legislation, and then watching the rhythm.”

County of Fayette;
State of Georgia

RESOLUTION 2011 - 06

A RESOLUTION ON "FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY AND PROTECTING FAYETTE COUNTY'S QUALITY OF LIFE" REQUESTING THE ELIMINATION OF ALL PLANNED PUBLIC MASS TRANSIT PROJECTS WITHIN FAYETTE COUNTY'S BOUNDARIES, INCLUDING CONCEPT 3, PLAN 2040 AND ALL OTHER PLANS THAT INCLUDE MASS TRANSIT.

WHEREAS, an overwhelming number of Fayette County citizens, as well as an overwhelming number of citizens across Metropolitan Atlanta, choose not to take mass transit despite all its supposed advantages; and

WHEREAS, no bus or light rail system in the United States is self sustaining as with systems within Metropolitan Atlanta, requiring enormous subsidies, while eliminating routes and personnel in the face of declining revenues; and

WHEREAS, the citizens of Fayette County will still have to continually pay for capital road projects as well as road paving and maintenance regardless of the existence of mass transit; and

WHEREAS, mass transit is not as dependable, convenient or comfortable as private transportation and provides no apparent time savings, especially in Fayette County; and

WHEREAS, it is fiscally impractical to attempt to justify mass transit for the 199 square mile land mass of Fayette County with a population of only 105,000, projected to reach only 179,000 by 2030, making the cost per rider extremely cost prohibitive with sustainability through the county's budget being impossible; and

WHEREAS, the normal transit bus in Georgia fills only 22 percent of its total daily seating capacity, and counting standing room they operate an average of about one-sixth full and the Atlanta rail system fills an average of 39 percent of its total daily seating capacity, but counting its ample standing-room capacity it operates only about one-eighth full, mass transit provides no more energy efficiency or environmental protection than the average Sport Utility Vehicle (SUV); and

WHEREAS, it is the duty of all jurisdictions in Fayette County to focus on protecting those assets, residential density remaining low, our excellent school system, our less congested roads, our green spaces and our exceptional commitment to public safety, which keeps our community strong and able to attract high paying jobs to Fayette County, avoiding attempts to mimic more rampant growth patterns in other areas;

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED THAT the Fayette County Board of Commissioners does hereby formally request (1) the removal of any and all planned public mass transit projects within the boundaries of Fayette County from all plans, tables and maps with the Federal Government, State of Georgia and Atlanta Regional Commission, (2) Fayette

County not be subject to any type of regional transit authority and (3) Fayette County be relieved of any financial burden for funding regional mass transit beyond the "Transportation Investment Act of 2010" (HB 277) formulas which our representatives to the Atlanta Regional Commission have already approved through the Regional Transportation Roundtable voting.

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So resolved this ___day of _____, 2011, by the

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
FAYETTE COUNTY, GEORGIA

_____
Herbert E. Frady, Chairman

Attest:

_____
Clerk/Deputy Clerk